

Statistical standard for Māori descent

Rationale

Māori descent is a key variable in meeting the demand for information on the number, distribution and characteristics of the tangata whenua.

Definition

A person has Māori descent if they are of the Māori race of New Zealand; this includes any descendant of such a person.

Operational issues

The definition requires people to know their biological ancestry. Traditionally, such knowledge is passed from generation to generation, with Māori relying on the recital of whakapapa by the appropriate tribal member, rather than on written documents.

There will be cases where knowledge of biological ancestry has been lost to a respondent, particularly where there has been an adoption in the family or where there has been a long line of descent from a single Māori ancestor.

The Māori renaissance of recent years may have resulted in an increased willingness to acknowledge Māori antecedence and the growing interest in genealogy, across the whole population, may mean that, in researching their family trees, more individuals will have discovered previously unknown Māori ancestry.

Despite these influences, when asking a question on Māori descent, as with any other question, we must assume that people are in a position to give us accurate information.

Explanatory notes

History of the definition

Prior to 1998 this standard included an ideal and an operational definition of 'Māori'. The ideal definition was "A person is said to have Māori ancestry if they have any Māori ancestors, no matter how distant". The operational definition, which was designed to take into account the concerns discussed above under the heading operational issues, was "A person is said to have Māori ancestry if they claim to have Māori ancestors, no matter how distant".

Data collection questions were designed in accordance with the ideal definition; the operational definition was intended as an acknowledgement of the constraints on data collection. However, the operational definition was found to be subject to misunderstanding, by data users, because it was less precise.

In 1998 Statistics New Zealand decided that the ideal and operational definitions should be combined and that they should be brought into line with the 1993 Electoral Act and the 1974 Māori Affairs Act (Te Ture Whenua Māori). Both of these acts define a Māori as: " 'Māori' means a person of the Māori race of New Zealand; and includes any descendant of such a person". In essence, this definition is the same as the ideal definition contained in previous versions of this Standard.

As noted before, data collection questions have always been designed in accordance with the previous Standard's ideal definition. The changes to the definition contained in this version of the Standard are to avoid misunderstandings about the data collected and to bring the definition into line with other legal definitions of 'Māori'. The changes to the definition are not expected to have any impact on questionnaire design or on the data collected.

Use of 'New Zealand' in output

This standard is strictly designed to obtain information on people of 'New Zealand Māori Descent'. However, the words 'New Zealand' should be omitted from output as they are seen by many as offensive to the tangata whenua. The term 'Māori Descent' should be used instead.

Cook Island Maori

The 1996 Ethnicity standard identifies people belonging to the Cook Island Maori ethnic group separately from the tangata whenua. The general view is that the genealogical and linguistic ties of the two groups make it desirable to retain the word 'Maori' in the Cook Island Maori descriptor. However, for the purposes of the Māori Descent standard, a Cook Island Maori should not be classified to the 'Māori Descent' category.

Descent versus ethnicity

Māori descent is a biological concept. The Report of the Review Committee on Ethnic Statistics 1988 recommended "That official statistical surveys, in addition to any cultural affiliation measure, obtain information on Māori people on the basis of descent."

The concept of ethnicity differs from that of descent, having a social and cultural base, as opposed to a biological base.

Ancestry versus descent

Previous versions of this standard used the term 'Māori Ancestry' rather than 'Māori Descent'. During consultation with the Māori community over the content of the 1996 Population Census a general consensus emerged that a descent-based question would be more appropriate than one based on ancestry. It was felt that 'descent' emphasised the importance of the respondent, as the responding unit, rather than the generations who came before the respondent. None of the submissions on the content of the 2001 Census sought to vary the wording of the question on Māori descent. This review of the standard, the first since 1994, will incorporate the change in terminology.

The change from ancestry to descent does not involve any change in the data being classified but is simply to reflect the preferred current usage.

Classification criteria

The classification criteria is a person's genealogical descent.

Classification

Māori descent is a flat classification with two categories – excluding residual categories. The residual categories are defined in

the Glossary.

Classification	Māori Descent – Standard Classification
Abbreviation	MAORIDES
Version	V1.0
Effective date	09/12/1998

Coding process

Where tick boxes are used coding will not be necessary except for responses that fall into one of the residual categories.

Imputation for electoral purposes

Following the Census of Population and Dwellings the Government Statistician is required, under the Electoral Act, to supply figures for the review of the General and Māori electorate boundaries. All New Zealand residents must be assigned as either having 'Māori Descent' or being of 'No Māori Descent'. An imputation must be made for all NZ resident, Census of Population and Dwellings respondents, who did not indicate one or other of these two categories.

Questionnaire module

Requirements

- The question should elicit responses based on descent not cultural affiliation.
- If a tick box question is used it should have three options, 'descent', 'no descent' and 'don't know'.
- If the term 'Māori' is used rather than 'NZ Māori', guide notes must state how Cook Island Maori should answer the question.
- Testing has shown that a simple question about descent (or ancestry) will confuse some people; to help clarify the question examples of people the respondent is descended from should be included. In the example below birth parent, grandparent and great-grandparent are used.

Example

The questionnaire module below is an example that meets the requirements documented in this statistical standard. Other questionnaire modules may vary in format but should conform to the requirements contained in this statistical standard.

16 Are you descended from a Māori (that is, did you have a Māori birth parent, grandparent or great-grandparent, etc)?

yes, go to **17**

no, go to **18**

don't know, go to **18**

Remember to mark your answer like this:

Standard output

Māori Descent

The standard output variable categories are the same as the classification categories. The residual categories may be output separately or combined. Where a combination item of residuals is to be used in output, this item should be labelled 'not elsewhere included' and should have a footnote indicating its composition.

The residual categories are defined in the Glossary.

In statistical publications the term 'Māori' should be used, rather than 'New Zealand Māori', in deference to the wishes of the tangata whenua.

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

Census of population and dwellings

The Census of Population and Dwellings uses Māori Descent as a prerequisite input variable for Iwi, ie a respondent must have NZ Māori descent in order to indicate an iwi affiliation. Any changes to the Māori Descent standard may have an effect on the Iwi standard or on statistics on iwi affiliation (see the statistical standard for Iwi).

Other

This standard is not used by any other part of the official statistical system in New Zealand although the definition of Māori descent, as used in this standard, matches the definitions of the Electoral Act and the Māori Affairs Act.

International

This standard is not based on any international standard or the standard of any other country.

Glossary

Tangata whenua

The people (or an individual) belonging to a particular place. The original inhabitants.

Whakapapa

An account or exposition of a person's genealogy.

Residual categories

Don't know

Use of this category is discretionary. The use of a category capturing don't know responses is most applicable to household

surveys where don't know may be a legitimate response to certain questions.

Refused to answer

This category is only used when it is known that the respondent has purposefully chosen not to respond to the question. Use of this residual category in processing is optional. Its use is most applicable in face-to-face or telephone interviews, but may be used in self-completed questionnaires if the respondent has clearly indicated they refuse or object to answering the question.

Response unidentifiable

This category is used when there is a response given, but:

1. the response is illegible, or
2. it is unclear what the meaning or intent of the response is – this most commonly occurs when the response being classified contains insufficient detail, is ambiguous or is vague, or
3. the response is contradictory eg, both the yes and no tick boxes have been ticked, or
4. the response is clear and seemingly within the scope of the classification but can not be coded because no suitable option (particularly other residual category options such as 'not elsewhere classified' or 'not further defined') exists in the classification or codefile.

Response outside scope

This category is used for responses that are positively identified (ie the meaning and the intent are clear) but which clearly fall outside the scope of the classification/topic as defined in the standard.

Not stated

This category is only used where a respondent has not given any response to the question asked, ie it is solely for non-response.

References

Department of Statistics (1988). *Report of the Review Committee on Ethnic Statistics* , Wellington.

Statistics New Zealand (1998). *2001 Census of Population and Dwellings Preliminary Views on Content* , Wellington.